

**Board of Veterans Services  
Meeting Minutes  
September 16, 2020**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held electronically on Wednesday, September 16, 2020.

**Members Present**

- Victor Angry
- Carl Bedell
- Carl Bess
- Paige Cherry
- Michael Dick
- Buddy Fowler
- Dan Helmer
- James Icenhour
- Thurraya Kent
- Tammi Lambert
- John Lesinski
- Kathleen Murphy
- Kathy Owens
- Frank Reyes
- Marcus Simon
- Julie Waters
- William Ashton, Chairman, Joint Leadership Council
- Jack Lanier, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair, Veterans Services Foundation
- John Maxwell, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services

**Members Absent**

- John Bell
- Lyla Kohistany
- Mamie Locke
- Bryce Reeves
- Linda Schreiner, Chair, Virginia War Memorial Foundation

**Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present**

- Kathleen Jabs, Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Nicole Anderson, Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS)
- Tramaine Carroll-Payne, VDVS
- Steven Combs, VDVS
- Leanna Craig, VDVS
- Claudia Flores, VDVS
- Thomas Herthel, VDVS
- Matthew Leslie, VDVS

- Martina Murray, VDVS
- Brian Pickral, VDVS
- Ross Koenig, VDVS
- Beverly VanTull, VDVS
- Annie Walker, VDVS
- Donna Williams, VDVS
- Aaron Palmer, Office of Senator John Bell
- Theresa Parker, Office of Senator Mamie Locke
- Chris Snider, Office of Senator Bryce Reeves
- Adrienne Tetrault, Office of Delegate Marcus Simon

**Materials Distributed as part of the Agenda Packet (sent via e-mail and posted on BVS webpage)**

- Draft Agenda
- Draft Minutes of the June 10, 2020, meeting
- BVS Point of Contact (POC) Reports
  - Benefit Services
  - Behavioral Health & Rehabilitative Services
  - Housing/Homelessness
  - Employment
  - Virginia Women Veterans Program
- Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations report
- Veterans Services Foundation report

**Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Dick called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., welcomed all attendees to the meeting and recognized Deputy Secretary Kathleen Jabs.

Chairman Dick led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Dick gave a brief overview of how the meeting would proceed.

**Roll Call and Quorum Determination**

The roll was called and a quorum was determined with 19 of 24 members present.

**Approval of Agenda**

Chairman Dick asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Delegate Kathleen Murphy made a **motion, seconded** by Ms. Kathy Owens, to approve the agenda as presented. There was no further discussion. A roll call vote was taken, and **the motion carried by a vote of 19-0**. (The approved agenda is included as Attachment 1 to these minutes).

**Approval of Minutes of the June 10, 2020, Meeting**

Chairman Dick asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2020, meeting. Ms. Kathy Owens made a **motion, seconded** by Delegate Kathleen Murphy, to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2020, meeting as presented. There was no discussion. A roll call vote was taken, and **the motion carried by a vote of 19-0**.

### **Introduction of VDVS staff and guests**

VDVS staff members introduced themselves. Their names are recorded above.

### **Update on current VDVS operational status**

Chairman Dick introduced Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) Commissioner John Maxwell, who provided an overview of the current VDVS operational status.

Commissioner Maxwell delivered the following report:

- Most VDVS operating locations, including 29 of 34 Benefits Services, are providing some form of in-person services. He noted that the VDVS offices in the Hampton and Richmond VA Medical Centers have not reopened yet at the request of the facility directors.
- Veterans and families are starting to return for VDVS services, though there may still be some reluctance.
- VDVS has launched increased outreach efforts, which has helped drive an increase in request for services.
- Contacts are up at the Benefits Services offices, though the number of claims filed is down. It takes longer to develop and file a claim in the current environment.
- When it comes to reopening offices, his top priority is the health and safety of those we serve and our VDVS team members. This may have slowed reopening a bit, but safety must come first.
- VVFS team members continue to provide behavioral health, homelessness and housing assistance, and other services. Total contacts are up, but there has been a decrease in new clients due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- VVFS Director Carol Berg has retired. Interim Director Leanna Craig has done an outstanding job. Ms. Brandi Jancitis has been hired as the new director – she will start in October.
- Mr. Michael Henshaw is the new cemetery director. He brings extensive background with the VA National Cemetery Administration and Army Mortuary Affairs. He is a great addition to the VDVS team.
- VA NCA awarded VDVS a \$5.2M grant for phased expansion of the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia.
- The veterans care centers continue full operations. The staff is fully committed to the health and safety of the residents. There have been a few COVID-19 cases, but these have been singular events. Testing is done weekly to help identify COVID-19 cases.
- The Veterans Care Center Workgroup is progressing, with the final report due to the General Assembly money committees on November 15. BVS members serve on the workgroup.
- Construction of the two new veterans care center continues on track, with the Puller Veterans Care Center (Vint Hill, Fauquier County) scheduled to open in March 2022 and the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center (Virginia Beach) in August 2022.
- VDVS Veterans Education, Transition, and Employment (VETE) programs continue to excel. The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program continues to help veterans connect to jobs. The Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) program has made new connections with partner health systems. The State Approving Agency for Veterans Education &

Training (SAA), which certifies GI Bill programs of instruction, will not make its survey target this year due to restrictions on visits caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The Virginia War Memorial is open and visitation is increasing. The Memorial held a great ceremony on Patriot's Day, and will hold special programs this Friday (September 18) for POW/MIA Remembrance Day and the Air Force Birthday.
- There have been no changes to the VDVS base budget, but VDVS did lose the additional funding and positions that had been included in the budget adopted by General Assembly in March. This has primarily impacted Benefit Services and VVFS.
- He will lead a strategic planning retreat next week with the deputy commissioner and directors.

Chairman Dick thanked Commissioner Maxwell for the great overview and opened the floor for any questions from the members. There were no questions.

**BVS Point of Contact Reports** - written reports attached as noted below

**Benefit Services** (See Attachment 2)

Mr. Carl Bedell (BVS) and Ms. Donna Williams (VDVS)

Mr. Bedell noted that the hybrid model of service (in-person and virtual services) has expanded VDVS's reach, and while this has taken some work and adaptation, this will pay off in the long run.

Chairman Dick asked if the VDVS Benefits Center of Excellence (COE) in Roanoke was having any operational challenges.

Ms. Donna Williams, VDVS Benefits Director, noted that the COE was created in 2015 under then-Benefits Director (now Deputy Commissioner) Thomas Herthel.

She said that the COE was working well, as most of their work was done electronically pre-COVID. Ms. Williams stated that the COE performs a vital quality check on all claims submitted by the Benefits Services offices prior to the claims being submitted to the VA.

Ms. Williams noted that Benefit Services is conducting an "Outreach Blitz" this month to let veterans know that VDVS is open for in-person and virtual services. She noted that appointments are up and that the new on-line appointment reservation tool is working well.

Chairman Dick asked Ms. Williams if there were any challenges. Ms. Williams answered that adapting to the hybrid model was still a challenge for both veterans and VDVS staff, with easy acceptance from veterans living near bases, but some challenges elsewhere.

Chairman Dick asked if any members had questions for Mr. Bedell or Ms. Williams.

Mr. Lesinski asked if VDVS Benefits staff salaries were still an issue. Mr. Bedell noted that his report, conducted last year, identified salary disparities with other state salaries, and that he was concerned that the loss of additional funding from the budget was a significant issue, and that he

would continue to look into this with Ms. Williams.

Chairman Dick thanked Mr. Bedell for his report.

**Behavioral Health and Rehabilitative Services (See Attachment 3)**

Mr. Carl Bess (BVS), Senator Mamie Locke (BVS), and Ms. Leanna Craig (VDVS)

Chairman Dick noted that this was a joint area with Mr. Carl Bess and Senator Locke, and asked Mr. Bess to report on this area. Mr. Bess noted that his and Senator Locke's report was attached.

He noted that an area of particular emphasis of the VDVS VVFS area was on outreach, virtual services, and cross-agency referrals to services.

Ms. Leanna Craig, VVFS Interim Director, noted that VVFS, like Benefit Services, continued to expand outreach, and was planning for future expansion of telehealth services.

Chairman Dick asked Mr. Bess and Ms. Craig about challenges facing VVFS. Ms. Craig noted that VVFS partners, like VVFS, were still adapting to a virtual operating environment, and specifically, how to connect veterans and families for services in the current environment.

Chairman Dick asked about services in areas with limited broadband. Ms. Craig said that this is certainly a challenge, both from a connectivity standpoint and an access to technology.

Chairman Dick thanked Ms. Craig, and asked if any members had questions for Mr. Bess or Ms. Craig. There were no further questions.

**Homelessness and Housing Services (See Attachment 4)**

Ms. Tammi Lambert (BVS) and Mr. Matthew Leslie (VDVS)

BVS Vice Chair Tammi Lambert recognized and thanked VDVS Housing Director Matthew Leslie and noted VVFS's wide network of partnerships to serve homeless veterans.

Vice Chair Lambert noted the increased need for housing and homeless services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She said that even though the eviction moratorium had been extended until the end of the year, the pandemic was still having a significant impact on services. She asked VDVS Housing Director (and VVFS Assistant Director) Matt Leslie to talk more about some of the programs and tools being employed, such as the Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) and CARES Act funding.

Mr. Leslie briefly covered the results of the Point-In-Time (PIT) Count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. The 2020 results showed an approximate 10% drop in the number of homeless veterans, to 395. This is down from 931 in 2011.

He noted that the Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) program, combined with the

eviction moratorium, is helping. He noted that VVFS and partners are leveraging some of the mortgage, rent, and relief program funds (approximately \$50M total for the program) released by Governor Northam from the CARES Act.

He shared his concern over what will happen in January when the eviction moratorium expires and how VVFS and partners can be prepared to help both with evictions and mortgages.

Vice Chair Lambert noted that Governor Northam has proposed approximately \$80M in rental protection funds in the budget currently before the General Assembly, and asked what the BVS might do to support this effort.

Chairman Dick asked if any of the legislative members had thoughts about this.

Delegate Dan Helmer noted that a letter from the BVS to the General Assembly, outlining the BVS position, could be helpful in illustrating the BVS support for this.

Chairman Dick said that such a letter should be routed through VDVS to Secretary Hopkins to the General Assembly.

Delegate Buddy Fowler and Delegate Kathleen Murphy echoed Delegate Helmer's proposed course of action.

Chairman Dick asked if Deputy Secretary Kathleen Jabs had a comment. The Deputy Secretary stated that the Secretary's office monitors the PIT numbers very carefully, and that any support for helping homeless veterans would be appreciated.

Chairman Dick asked Mr. Combs about the Commonwealth's prior statements regarding the functional end to veterans homelessness, and whether the current situation has changed this. Mr. Combs replied that, to his knowledge, the current situation has not changed the Commonwealth's commitment, but he did note that the earlier comments from the VDVS team members indicated that there were strains on the system. Mr. Combs asked Mr. Leslie to provide more detail.

Mr. Leslie likened services for homeless veterans to care provided by an emergency room (ER). He said that the ER is functioning well right now because of the influx of resources, but that others in the hospital that needed care, namely veterans (and citizens) face the possibility of evictions, with Virginia having one of the highest eviction rates in the nation, and that evictions affected both renters and landlords. He said that VDVS and other providers were moving into uncharted territory in this area and that there could be significant impacts in the long term. He said that VDVS and partners were doing all they could and that VDVS had the right partners at the table.

Chairman Dick asked Delegate Helmer if he would make a motion that a letter be sent from the Board to VDVS and on to the Secretary and the Governor, expressing the Board's support for efforts to address veterans homelessness in the current climate. Delegate Dan Helmer made a **motion, seconded** by Delegates Buddy Fowler and Kathleen Murphy, to send such a letter. Chairman Dick asked Vice Chair Lambert and Mr. Leslie to draft a letter for consideration and

approval by the Board at the next meeting. There was no further discussion. A roll call vote was taken, and **the motion carried by a vote of 17-0.**

**Employment** (See Attachments 5.a. and 5.b.)

Ms. Kathy Owens and Ms. Thurraya Kent (BVS). Deputy Commissioner Annie Walker, Ms. Nicole Anderson, and Mr. Ross Koenig (VDVS)

Ms. Owens noted that Ms. Kent had had to drop off the line.

Ms. Owens reviewed the slides (Attachment 5.b.) for the Employment reports. She covered:

- Transition & Employment (T&E) programs, including the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, the number of participating employers, and number of veterans hired to date;
- COVID-19 impacts on VDVS T&E programs;
- Deficiencies in the current CRM system and the need for a replacement system that will unite V3, VTAP, and MMAC under one system. The DBDriven CRM platform is recommended;
- Proposed legislation to expand VTAP under the V3 umbrella;
- T&E funding and recommended budget allocation to deploy a new CRM system, which she noted seemed like a large ask, but was cost-effective over the current system.

Ms. Owens noted that additional information could be found in the Employment report (Attachment 5.a.) and asked the VDVS team if they had anything to add.

Ms. Nicole Anderson, Director of VDVS T&E programs, noted the following:

- Launch of V3 program as a virtual program;
- Two hiring fairs, with 600 veterans and 80 employers;
- Additional virtual hiring fairs planned for the fall;
- That the next V3 report would push VDVS and V3 over the Governor's goal of 65,000 veterans hired;
- That despite COVID-19, employers continue to hire, with over 1,200 employers certified to date.

Mr. Ross Koenig, V3 Program Manager, added that a V3 employer certification is good for five years, signifying/launching a five-year (or more) partnership between V3 and that employer.

Ms. Owens thanked the VDVS team and asked if there were any questions.

Mr. John Lesinski asked about the earmark of funds donated by Altria and the Dominion Charity Classic. Deputy Commissioner Annie Walker stated that the Altria funds were earmarked for the payment of courses in advanced manufacturing at community colleges for veterans in the Richmond area, while the Dominion Charity Classic were earmarked for the training of employers and training/employment of transitioning service members and veterans.

Mr. Lesinski asked if these two funding sources could be applied to the development and deployment of a CRM. DC Walker stated that she thought so. Mr. Lesinski said that this would

be helpful for the members of the Veterans Services Foundation, and offered that VDVS and V3 could follow up with him about this.

Mr. Lesinski added that Smithfield Foods was a big supporter of the VSF and homeless efforts through the Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) program, and that more information would be shared at the September 17 VSF meeting.

Chairman Dick asked about the status of the proposed VTAP-related legislation. Commissioner Maxwell replied that VDVS did see potential benefit in asking for this legislation and that potential legislation was under discussion with the Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs.

Chairman Dick asked about the timeline for fixing the CRM issue. DC Walker said that it was tied to the availability of funding. Ms. Owens said that Zoho was under contract through at least 2020, and that deployment of a new system could happen in 2021 or 2022.

**Women Veterans Programs** (See Attachments 6.a. and 6.b.)

Delegate Kathleen Murphy and Ms. Lyla Kohistany (BVS) and Ms. Beverly VanTull (VDVS)

Delegate Kathleen Murphy highlighted the growing number of women veterans and their needs in areas such as homelessness, suicide prevention, and child care. She noted that she had advocated for a 2<sup>nd</sup> VDVS Women Veterans Program position but that funding had gone away due to the budget situation. Delegate Murphy thanked Deputy Commissioner Walker and Ms. Beverly VanTull for their commitment, and turned things over to Ms. VanTull to continue the report.

Ms. VanTull thanked the BVS members for their support of VDVS women veterans programs. She noted that there were over 107,000 women veterans in Virginia and that a focus of VDVS programs was to inform women veterans of and connect them to the benefits and services available to them. She discussed the switch from in-person to virtual/on-line services and that this has been successful, though many still welcome and need the in-person contacts.

Ms. VanTull stated that over 1,300 women veterans from across Virginia, and from 30 states, participated in the 2020 Virtual Summit, with great connections in areas like Benefits, employment, and entrepreneurship. She noted the participation of partners like the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Small Business Administration, and Virginia Employment. She also discussed VDVS partnerships with veterans service organizations like the VFW and DAV, other state agencies, and community partners. She added that these partners were vital referral sources for a spectrum of services, more important now than ever.

Delegate Murphy said that she hoped there would be support to restore the funding for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Women Veterans Program position when resources were available

Chairman Dick thanked Delegate Murphy and Ms. VanTull for their report, and remarked on the disproportionate impact that military service has on women veterans. He also noted that many



small businesses are owned by women veterans.

Mr. William Ashton of the JLC commented on his “day job” with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and said that USDA has a number of program for women and veterans, including women farmers, and that he would be happy to share this information with VDVS and the BVS.

Chairman Dick thanked the BVS members and the VDVS team for the five detailed reports presented at today’s meeting. He noted that quite a bit of information was presented, and asked the Board members to absorb the information, understand the challenges and opportunities for Virginia veterans, and help spread the word in their communities of all of the services available. He said he looked forward to more reports at future meetings.

### **Reports**

Mr. William Ashton, the Chairman of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC), gave a short report. (See Attachment 7). He noted that the adoption of the JLC’s 2021 recommendations had been extended to the October 21 meeting. He clarified that the next JLC meeting was October 21 (not the 22<sup>nd</sup>) and that the members had voted to meet in person. He stated that he was honored to serve as Chairman of the JLC and that he was concluding his sixth (and final) year of service on the JLC.

Mr. Icenhour asked for confirmation that the JLC would have its 2021 recommendations (one-pagers in JLC format) following the October 21 meeting so that BVS could see and support the JLC’s recommendations. Mr. Ashton said that the prioritized 2021 JLC package would be available shortly after the 2021 meeting. Chairman Dick thanked Mr. Icenhour, and said that this would be something that should be part of the next BVS meeting.

Mr. Jack Lanier, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF), gave a short report. (See Attachment 8). He highlighted that there were 615 donors and over \$625,000 donations in FY20. He said that the new VSF leaders included Mr. John Lesinski, who is also a BVS member, as VSF Chair. He said that Mr. Lesinski had hit the ground running, with new initiatives launched that should lead to increased donations in FY21. He also noted that four long-serving members had rotated off the VSF.

Ms. Kathy Owens, who is also a member of the Virginia War Memorial Foundation (VWMF), stated that neither VWMF Chair Linda Schreiner nor VWMF President Pam Seay were able to attend. Ms. Owens provided a short update on VWMF operations. She noted that the Memorial had re-opened for in-person visits with several programs already held. She said that a virtual 5K (theme = “They Gave All”) would be held November 4-10, with sign ups on the VWMF website. She said that a live ceremony would be held at the Memorial on November 11. (VDVS NOTE: this ceremony is restricted to 250 people due to social distancing requirements and limits on crowd sizes, with sign-ups through the Memorial website. It will also be broadcast and livestreamed to reach a wide audience). Ms. Owens concluded the VWMF report by noting that, despite COVID-19, several large donations had come in and that she didn’t anticipate any shortfalls.

## **New Business**

There were no “Good of the Order” reports for this meeting.

Chairman Dick noted that, pre-COVID, a joint meeting was planned for December 16 with the JLC. Based on the size of the room that would be required for a joint meeting, and in consultation with VDVS, he suggested that the Board consider severing the joint meeting on December 16 and meet on a separate date. He also noted that this meeting should be planned for sometime after the JLC’s October 21 meeting so that time could be devoted to reviewing, discussing, and supporting the JLC proposals. He asked Commissioner Maxwell and CDC Combs for any recommendations.

The members considered several options, including sticking with the original date or moving the meeting to December 17. After extensive discussion, the members agreed that there was merit to holding two meetings, including one prior to the General Assembly’s pre-filing deadline that was dedicated to reviewing the JLC’s recommendations. It was agreed that an acceptable course of action would be for the BVS to hold two meetings. The first would be a short meeting (planned for one hour or so) on November 13 dedicated to review, discuss, and vote on support of the JLC’s 2021 proposals and to discuss any items brought forth by BVS legislative members. The second would be on December 17, with the focus on Point of Contact reports and other “regular” BVS business.

Ms. Kathy Owens made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Jim Icenhour, for the BVS to meet on November 13 and on December 17, with both meetings planned as virtual (electronic) meetings. Chairman Dick asked if VDVS could support this, and Commissioner Maxwell replied that VDVS could. There was no further discussion. A roll call vote was taken, and **the motion carried by a vote of 16-0.**

There was no other new business before the Board.

## **Public Comment**

There were no individuals seeking to make public comment.

## **Wrap Up & Adjournment**

Chairman Dick thanked all of the members for being part of today’s meeting, especially the legislative members who are very busy this time of year. He also thanked all of the VDVS team members on the call today for all their work.

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Dick asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. John Lesinski made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Victor Angry, that the Board adjourn. **The motion carried by unanimous consent** and the meeting adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES**

**AGENDA**  
**ELECTRONIC MEETING**

**September 16, 2020**  
**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

- I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:00 – 10:02)
- II. Roll Call and Quorum Determination – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:02 – 10:04)
- III. Approval of Agenda – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:04 – 10:06)
- IV. Approval of Minutes of the June 10, 2020 meeting– *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:06 – 10:10)
- V. Introduction of DVS staff and guests – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:10 – 10:12)
- VI. Update on current DVS operational status – *John Maxwell, DVS Commissioner* (10:12 – 10:20)
- VII. Point of contact reports – *members* (10:20-11:20)
  - a. Benefit Services – *Carl Bedell*
  - b. Behavioral Health and Rehabilitative Services – *Carl Bess, Mamie Locke*
  - c. Homelessness and Housing Services – *Tammi Lambert*
  - d. Employment – *Thurarraya Kent and Kathy Owens*
  - e. Women Veterans – *Lyla Kohistany and Kathleen Murphy*
- VIII. Reports (11:20 – 11:35)
  - a. Joint Leadership Council – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman*
  - b. Veterans Services Foundation – *Jack Lanier, VSF 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman*
  - c. Virginia War Memorial Foundation – *Linda Schreiner, VWMF Chairman*
- IX. New Business: (11:35-11:50)
  - “Good of the Order” Reports, *All Members*
  - Discussion of new date for next BVS meeting
  - Other new business – as requested by members
- X. Public comment (11:50 – 11:55)
- XI. Wrap Up & Adjourn – *Michael Dick, Chairman* (11:55-12:00)

## **ATTACHMENT 2**

### **BVS POC Report**

#### **Benefit Services**

1. Date of Report: September 16, 2020
2. BVS POC(s): Carl Bedell
3. Service Area/Program: Benefit Services
4. VDVS Director/Program Manager: Donna Williams
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?): The Virginia Department of Veterans Services advocates for Virginia veterans and connects them to benefits and services they have earned.
6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)? Virginia veterans and their family members who are seeking federal, state, and local benefits and services.
7. How is the service/program delivered? VDVS operates 34 benefit service offices across the commonwealth. All services are provided free of charge.
8. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans? VDVS Benefits assists veterans in obtaining health benefits, disability compensation, VA pensions, survivor benefits, and appeals.
9. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth? VDVS services helps the Commonwealth by ensuring Virginia veterans receive the benefits they are entitled to. In many cases, these benefits are fiscal. In Fiscal Year 2019, Virginia veterans received over \$3.85 billion in federal benefits.

**10.** What is the statutory authority for the service area/program?

**State:** Code of Virginia, Title 2.2. Administration of Government, Chapter 20

**Federal:** 38USC 501a

**11.** Where do the resources for the service area/program come from (general fund, non-general fund, donations, etc.?)

VDVS Benefits is funded through the general fund. The FY 2020 budget for Veteran Benefit Services is \$8.8M.

**12.** How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of services? What service adaptations have been made or are planned?

Due to COVID-19, VDVS closed all benefits office in March 2020. In June, VDVS began a phased reopening of Benefits offices and is currently operating under a hybrid model which provides services both face to face (in office) and virtually. This model is designed to have Veteran Service Representatives conduct face to face appointments with veterans three days per week, while conducting virtual appointments with veterans two days per week. During these appointments, the representatives are developing and submitting claims and related documents electronically to the VA via the Center of Excellence (COE). The COE conducts quality reviews of the documents before forwarding the claim to the VA. Although traditional outreach is limited due to no large gatherings, Benefits is currently using every outreach tool at its disposal to inform the veterans that we are open for business.

13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area/program at present?

There are two challenges: (1) the unknown outcome of possible budget cuts; and (2) Moving from a very robust office model to a hybrid model. There are many benefits to the hybrid model but the transition is challenging during the pandemic. Benefit application submittal rates unsurprisingly fell during the office closures and bringing the office contact and submittal rate back to where it was prior to the COVID pandemic will be a challenge. The Benefits Offices are working on an “appointment only” schedule for safety concerns and, in some cases, have been forced to close due to COVID exposure. This has affected the customer rate at the open benefit offices, where it is still below the pre-pandemic numbers. The Benefits team continues to work to address these challenges but it is difficult with the uncertain personnel schedules resulting from staff illnesses, COVID exposure that require quarantine, some staff are considered high-risk, and other necessary COVID-related accommodations.

14. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

This hybrid state of service offerings is allowing VDVS benefits to expand a “virtual model” of doing business. This virtual model removes geographic barriers to access the Benefits offices and provides the opportunity for the Benefits staff to reach and support larger numbers of Veterans across the Commonwealth.

15. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?

Staff salary levels remain significantly below comparable positions in other State agencies and Veteran service organizations. This is an ongoing issue that affects retention and morale within VDVS Benefits. The effects of staff turn-over include significant operational efficiency loss.

## **ATTACHMENT 3**

### **BVS POC REPORT**

#### **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & REHABILITATIVE SERVICES**

1. **Date of Report:** 17 August 2020
2. **BVS POC(s):** Senator Mamie Locke and Carl Bess
3. **Service Area/Program:** Behavioral Health & Rehabilitative Services
4. **VDVS Director/Program Manager:** Leanna Craig
5. **Mission of service area/program:**

The Virginia Veteran and Family Support Program (VVFS) is operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services and provides OUTREACH, CONNECTION and SUPPORT to veterans and their families as they address the challenges of military service, transition, deployments, Post Traumatic Stress, and other behavioral health concerns, as well as Traumatic Brain Injuries and other physical injuries.

SERVICES THEY PROVIDE: Referral and connection services are coordinated with Community Services Boards, brain injury service providers, VA medical facilities and other public and private agencies. Additionally, VVFS provides direct support via personalized care coordination, peer-to-peer mentoring, caregiver skill building and support groups.

6. **Who does the service area/program serve?**

Veterans of any era (regardless of discharge status) who are Virginia residents; members of the Virginia National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service; and family members and caregivers of those veterans and service members. They work hard to provide a "no wrong door approach", meaning if they can't provide that service within the program, they'll do their best to connect them to a resource/provider that can.

7. **How is the service/program delivered?**

Service is delivered throughout the state and is divided into four regions, with programming such as Mission: Healthy Families, Mission: Healthy Relationships, Veteran Peer Services, Justice Involved services and Resource Specialists that provide comprehensive assessments of the Service Member, Veteran and Family (SMVF) need. They also do behavior health suicide screening within this framework. From there, depending on the needs assessed and identified, they provide internal services (peer groups, care coordination, resource connection) as well as hands-on connections with the VA's Community Services Boards, private providers, and many others for behavioral health and rehabilitative needs.

8. **How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?**

Delivering these services assists Virginia's veterans by providing resources, services and benefits they may be connected to and did not know they could benefit from. It also assists by bridging barriers and gaps in services and providing a smooth avenue around

many federal, state and local systems.

**9. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?**

By helping the veteran, it helps the Commonwealth by continuing to ensure Virginia is a veteran friendly state and provides comprehensive and wrap-around services for those residing in Virginia.

**10. What is the statutory authority for the service area/program?**

Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) is a legislatively mandated program operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, which is overseen by the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs. The VVFS operates in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department of Rehabilitative Services. It was established in 2008 in response to the growing need to improve and expand services to the nation's veterans and their family members whose lives have been touched by stress-related injuries or traumatic brain injury. Formerly known as the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, it was re-branded to the Virginia Veteran and Family Support on October 1, 2015.

**11. Where do the resources for the service area/program come from?**

The Virginia Veterans Services Foundation is an independent agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, supporting the interests of veterans and their families through the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs and is governed by an appointed Board of Trustees. The Virginia Veterans Services Foundation provides *supplemental funding* when state and federal resources are not available.

**12. How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of services? What service adaptations have been made or are planned?**

COVID-19 initially impacted service delivery by going from a full office and community presence to a 100% virtual model; however, the VVFS was able to transition to this posture without stopping services. They have worked very hard since then with several committees and strategy planning to assist veterans "where they are" which is an important aspect of the services they provide. They have adapted to a more virtual environment where possible, utilized the VA and community partners for resource collaboration during COVID-19, and have transitioned back to a hybrid model where they can see veterans in offices when needed as well as extenuating circumstances with proper protocol and policies in place.

What is especially noteworthy is that they have been extremely successful in training Community Service Board (CSB) staff and other providers in Military Cultural Competency (MCC) in the virtual environment and have trained 1,120 individuals since March 2020 as part of the Governor's Challenge for Suicide Prevention for Service Members, Veterans, and Family Members (SMVF). This training helps other providers be "force extenders" in connecting veterans to behavioral health and other needed services.

**13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area/program at present?**

Continuing to adapt to the COVID-19 situation, the inability to continue community

partnerships in a face-to-face setting, while they are making “virtual” work, there is an adaptability piece for this. Some veterans are not comfortable with the virtual environment and some touchpoints are harder to make when they aren't in the community and collaborating with partners on a more frequent basis.

**14. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?**

The continuance of strategic planning around a virtual environment, growing the resource pool for those providing services for behavioral health/rehabilitative services, and continuously receiving partner updates on these for cross-systems referrals. Continually and strategically planning ways to reach those in the community that might not reach out to them first.

**15. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?**

Often the work in VVFS with regard to behavioral health and rehabilitative services can be complex. They are a touchpoint and ongoing support for the veteran in a very complex world of multiple resources at the federal, state and local level. It's hard to capture all they do, or what it might take to see successful outcomes, as they try to bridge any gap and barrier to services and work endlessly to ensure connection needs are met.

They greatly appreciate the support of the Commonwealth and Leadership for the continuous belief in the program. Additionally, they would appreciate any opportunity to present at future meetings and look forward to bolstering their partnership with the BVS.

Prepared by:

Leanna Craig, Regional Director VVFS, and Matthew Leslie, Assistant Director VVFS



# **ATTACHMENT 4**

## **BVS POC REPORT**

### **Housing/Homelessness**

1. Date of Report: August 20, 2020
2. BVS POC: Tammy Lambert
3. Service Area/Program: Housing/Homelessness
4. VDVS Director/Program Manager: Matt Leslie
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):

    VVFS is a supporting role regarding housing and homelessness through direct services by navigating veterans to shelter/housing resources and providing state coordination through the Governor's Coordinating Council on Homelessness. VVFS also manages the Virginia Veteran Homeless Fund through the Veterans Services Foundation that supports designated veteran housing non-profits with providing gap expenses when housing veterans experiencing homelessness.

6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)?

    Veterans at-risk or experiencing homelessness

7. How is the service/program delivered?

    Service is delivered through a network of providers within Homeless Continuums of Care throughout the Commonwealth

8. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?

    Ensuring that veteran homelessness is prevented whenever possible and if not, that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

9. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?

    Keeping veterans housed ensures they have greater access to work, education, and healthcare.

10. What is the statutory authority for the service area/program? NA

11. Where do the resources for the service area/program come from (general fund, non-general fund, donations, etc.?)

The veteran homeless systems receive funds from federal, state, and donated funds

12. How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of services? What service adaptations have been made or are planned?

Veterans experiencing homelessness are on average a high risk for COVID-19 particularly those residing in shelters. Congregate living shelters have been greatly impacted due to the need to social distance. Systems have responded by using hotel/motels for short-term shelter and trying to get individuals housed as quickly as possible. CARES Act funding has increased the ability to do this but the eviction moratoriums have also reduced the amount of housing available for chronically homeless veterans in need of permanent supportive housing. Inspecting the units (HUD Requirement) has also been more challenging however systems have adapted by doing inspections virtually. Supportive services have gone mostly virtual which has resulted in some veterans feeling more socially isolated although it also has made it easier for some veterans who are open to it.

13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area/program at present?

The biggest challenge is the impending eviction crisis due to the increased unemployment and economic crisis. The eviction moratoriums have been successful in keeping people in housing but it also has delayed the inevitable of a historic eviction crisis. The homeless systems do not have the capacity to handle such an increase in need. The housing crisis has been growing for years and COVID has exposed the deficiencies in both affordable housing and the mental health systems.

14. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

A recognition that housing is essential part of healthcare and wellbeing and future opportunities to make housing more affordable. The new state Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) funded through CARES Act funding and new eviction laws are providing an opportunity to learn new best practices in keeping people (including veterans) housed.

15. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?

Point in Time Count

- Virginia held the 2020 Point-in-Time Count on the night of January 22, 2020. Preliminary data for veterans experiencing homelessness was 395. This was a 13% reduction from 2019 and 58% from 2011. The unsheltered number reduced 22% (2019-92, 2020 -72) and the number of female veterans reduced 32% (2019-57, 2020-39) (The final data from HUD is anticipated to be announced in Fall 2020.)

- a. The reduction has been a continual trend due to increased coordination across systems, targeting of resources, and identification of veterans experiencing homelessness. However, there is a huge risk that these gains could be lost with the current economic and eviction crisis.
- b. The Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) program, funded by the US. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, which supports non-profits across the Commonwealth to serve veterans experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness has seen two large increases in the last 5 months from the CARES Act. This funding, along with the eviction moratoriums, has assisted in sustaining efforts during the crisis and currently have not seen evidence of any significant increases in veterans experiencing homelessness and many communities have reported a decrease.

## **ATTACHMENT 5.a.**

### **BVS POC REPORT**

#### **EMPLOYMENT**

1. Date of Report:

August 20, 2020

2. BVS POC(s):

Thurraja Kent and Kathy Owens

3. Service Area/Program:

Employment

4. VDVS Director/Program Manager:

Nicole Anderson and Ross Koenig

5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):

Core functions for Employment (V3); Code of Virginia 2.2-2001.2

A comprehensive program to reduce unemployment among veterans by assisting businesses to attract, hire, train, and retain veterans. Such program shall promote strategies for connecting employers to qualified veterans.

A workforce assessment and training program for participating employers

A certification process for participating employers with the objective of setting measurable goals for hiring and retaining veterans.

6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)?

Employers with current or future hiring needs in the Commonwealth of Virginia are the clients of this service line.

7. How is the service/program delivered?

Program is delivered primarily through face-to-face meeting, networking, and training opportunities. Under the current conditions of COVID-19 service provision has modified and is now being provided telephonically and via virtual meeting platforms. This includes Core Curriculum trainings, virtual meetings, and virtual networking opportunities to connect to job seekers. This also includes

the virtual Virginia Veterans and Military Affairs Conference and V3 Awards Ceremony and four training opportunities for attendees designed to support business needs in a COVID economy. There are over 329 attendees of this conference that are clients of the V3 Program, and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce has over 460 registered employers.

8. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?

By providing employers the insights and best practices in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of veterans and distributing an employment grant for small and medium size employers who hire and retain veterans for one year in the state, the V3 program provides a full life cycle approach for employers engaged in the program to improve the immediate and long term employment condition of Virginia's veterans.

Altria Grant for two years has provided \$100,000 each year in fellowship funding for licensure/certification related to specific trades. Dominion Charity Classic has provided \$420,980.23 from FY 17-21 which has supported the V3 Program and its services to employers directly (V3 Core Curriculum Training, Virtual Networking Events, and workshops to support employers in a COVID environment. V3 Program has 64,329 hires with certified employers since the program began in 2012 till Q2 report collected in July for 2020.

9. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?

By providing employment opportunities for Virginia veterans and improving their employment condition, this increases the purchasing power, gross domestic product, and economic stability of the state. This also decreases the state's unemployment liability thereby reducing the cost to employers and taxpayers. Veterans employed in the state subsequently use their federal benefits for additional education, licensure, and certification. The well-educated and experienced veteran workforce attracts additional businesses to the state, providing to the continuity of Virginia as the best state in the country for businesses.

10. What is the statutory authority for the service area/program?

§ 2.2-2001.2. Initiatives to reduce unemployment among veterans.

A. The Department shall develop a comprehensive program to reduce unemployment among veterans by assisting businesses to attract, hire, train, and retain veterans. Such program shall promote strategies for connecting employers to qualified veterans and include (i) a workforce assessment and training program for participating employers and (ii) a certification process for participating employers with the objective of setting measurable goals for hiring and retaining veterans.

11. Where do the resources for the service area/program come from (general fund, non-general fund, donations, etc.?)

General Funds are appropriated to provide services for the V3 Program. Additional funding sources include the Altria Grant, Dominion Charity Classic, and funding provided in kind by partners such as the Virginia Chamber Foundation. Currently General Fund 1000 has \$2,922,225 appropriated for FY 21. This includes all funding that will provide for the V3 program and staff costs.

12. How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of services? What service adaptations have been made or are planned?

All relationships have had to move to a virtual format. State requirements for virtual platforms have placed strains on the team's ability to quickly and efficiently virtually meet with their contacts and clients. Some partners are restricted in what platforms or topics can be discussed by their organizations as the business landscape is being redefined by our current conditions. The workforce services and events have largely been moved, suspended, or cancelled due to the instability of the ability to provide a safe business environment for in person meetings. However, the team quickly adapted and were provided cameras to facilitate personable virtual meetings. We have also determined suitable meeting platforms for use for our teams.

The number of in-person networking events has decreased, due to our inability to schedule the Hire Vets Now networking events on military installations that would be held at a rate of approximately one per month. Since March, two virtual events have been provided compared to the six planned. Services provided have also been modified, so that the V3 team can connect their employers with resources and grants to stabilize their workforce and support the continued success of their organization and subsequently the employment of veterans.

13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area/program at present?

Currently the administrative burden for the team to manage over 1,100 certified employers and 900 enrolled with a team of four field staff is significant. The Customer Relationship Management system implemented in 2019, Zoho, has not delivered on the efficiencies it was designed to provide. Further discussions with the developers have identified that due to the system supporting all of VETE and VVFS it is not possible to modify the system to provide the efficiencies needed by the V3 team. Additionally, there have been several instances of data loss and a need to maintain records outside of the system to verify data accuracy. De-duplication efforts take considerable time from the team each month for resources

duplicated from other DVS Service lines, approximately 5 hours each month. This is an ongoing burden that will continue to require staff time.

14. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

In May and June, the V3 team provided two virtual networking events in collaboration with the Virginia Chamber Foundation. DVS paid half of the cost, \$6,000 for each event, which allowed 40 employers for each event to network with over 400 transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses. These events had 200% higher attendance than events hosted on base in person, and allowed employers from a wider area to network with the job seekers. There is significant opportunity to continue to provide a virtual networking platform to allow two events per quarter at an annual cost of \$48,000 per year.

Military spouse unemployment and underemployment continues to be a national challenge. Military spouse unemployment is identified at 24% in 2017, over six times what the average American faces. Military spouses are 30% more likely to have a college degree. They are an underutilized talent pool that will further strengthen the Virginia economy. Increasing the V3 employment grant and services to support military spouse employment as fully as the Commonwealth has embraced the mission of supporting veteran employment is an excellent strategic opportunity to continue to make Virginia the most veteran friendly state in the nation.

Using legislative action to add VTAP into the V3 code is another advantageous opportunity. There has been confusion surrounding the brand of the Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP) and the specifics of how the program addresses the needs of Veterans. The lack of clarity often stems from the transition component which can be construed as providing transition services to homeless veterans or those that are justice involved and transitioning back into society. Also, there is a perception of duplication of services with the Virginia Employment Commission's JVSG program that serves a similar population. Aligning VTAP with the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program would clarify VTAP's purpose and services offered to Veterans and strengthen the V3 brand in the process. Adjusting the code to be more inclusive and reflective of the services provided by VTAP promotes easier communication about the services being offered and for service members and spouses to seek out our services. The current language only implies that VTAP's services are offered, but does not specifically codify all that is offered to transitioning service members and spouses. This change would expand the language to include the additional services offered by VTAP such as assisting with civilian employment skills, and connections to

Virginia apprenticeships, internships, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/pay-benefits/2020/07/25/to-solve-military-spouse-unemployment-it-needs-to-be-tracked-report-says/>

<https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Military%20Spouses%20in%20the%20Workplace.pdf>

15. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?

The V3 team has surpassed the 1,000 certified employer mark in the previous year and our Communications team identified that the V3 has one of DVS strongest brand recognition. At this point, the V3 team no longer has to focus on recruitment of employers, with the exception of Southwest Virginia. Instead, they focus on quality client service and the volume of clients. For this reason, it is critical that the team receive a more functional CRM platform and virtual networking platform to provide services for these employers, as the program will continue to grow without recruitment effort of the team.

The current CRM platform was identified in the VTAP OSIG audit as deficient and structurally unsound as it allows anyone with permission to the platform to delete records without leaving any record of the action being taken. This means the team would be unaware data was lost, or who took that action. This leaves the team's data in a very vulnerable position, and the OSIG recommendation was that another CRM be utilized.

Additionally, the current CRM was developed by Zoho, which is headquartered in India. The proposed CRM developers, DB Driven are headquartered in Virginia, SWAM Certified, and a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business.



## ATTACHMENT 5.b.

### Service Area/Program- Transition & Employment

**VDVS Deputy Commissioner-**

Annie Walker

**VDVS Director-**

Nicole Anderson

**VDVS Program Manager-**

Ross Koenig



**BVS POCs-**

Thuraya Kent

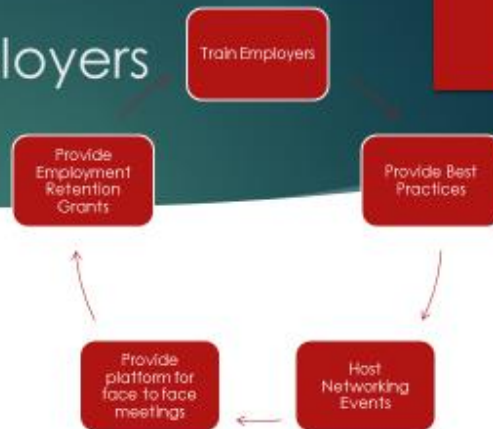
Kathy Owens

### Mission of Virginia Values Veterans- V3

► Reduce Unemployment among Veterans



## V3 Assistance to Employers



- Assist Businesses to attract, hire, train and retain veterans
- Promote strategies for connecting employers to qualified veterans (VTAP)
- Create a workforce assessment and training program for employers
- Create a certification process for employers for hiring and retaining veterans

## T & E Program Benefits

- Improves Veterans Employment Conditions
- Increases Veterans purchasing power and therefore VA GDP and Economic Stability
- Decreases VA unemployment liability
- Increases veteran spending on education, licensure and certification
- Attracts new businesses to VA by having a skilled, well-educated veteran workforce

## T & E Program Successes

- ▶ **Over 1000 certified employers**
  - ▶ **Over 64,329 Veterans hired**
  - ▶ **V3 identified as one of DVS programs with the strongest brand recognition**
- 

## T & E COVID Impacts

- ▶ **Restrictions on in-person Relationships**
- ▶ **Restrictions on Client Platforms and Content**
- ▶ **Cancellation of in-person Conferences and Networking Events**
- ▶ **\*Creation of Virtual Events**

- ▶ \*2 Virtual Networking Events were held in May and June with 40 Employers and over 400 transitioning servicemember, veteran and spouse participants- representing a 200% increase in similar in-person events. Scheduling 2 more events for 2020.
-

## T and E Program Challenges

- ▶ **Customer Relationship Management System-**
  - ▶ **The Current CRM platform, Zoho, implemented in 2019-2021:**
    - ▶ Did not deliver on efficiencies
    - ▶ Requires significant staff time to eliminate redundancies
    - ▶ Was identified in the VTAP OSIG audit as deficient and structurally unsound (it allows anyone with permission to the platform to delete records without leaving any record of the action being taken)
    - ▶ Requires a back-up outside of the system to verify data accuracy
- 

## T & E Program Opportunities

- ▶ **Sponsor bill to expand VTAP's mission under the V3 umbrella**
    - ▶ Prevent Brand Confusion
    - ▶ Prevent Perception of Service Duplication with VEC JVSG Program
    - ▶ Codify that services are offered to Transitioning Servicemembers and Spouses
  - ▶ **New CRMS- DBDriven**
    - ▶ Verified Efficiencies
    - ▶ Eliminates Data Dump and Redundancy
    - ▶ Unites V3, MMAC and VTAP under 1 CRM System
    - ▶ SWAM Company which will count toward DVS and The Commonwealth goal of 42% of discretionary spending be used to advance equity for small, woman, minority and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses in state contracting opportunities.
  - ▶ **Reaching additional Veterans through Virtual Events**
    - ▶ Ensure Global Access to the military community in a cost effective way
-

## T & E Funding

Budget: \$2,922,225

**2022 Budget Request  
for new CRM System-  
\$562,000**

- ▶ General Fund
  - ▶ \*Altria Grant- \$100,000/yr
  - ▶ \*Dominion Charity Classic- \$84,000/yr
- \*These funds are earmarked and funneled through the VVSF.

### Partners:

Virginia Chamber Foundation

Others

## **ATTACHMENT 6.a.**

### **BVS POC Report**

#### **Virginia Women Veterans Program**

1. Date of Report:
  - August 20, 2020
2. Virginia BVS POC(s):
  - Delegate Kathleen Murphy and Lyla Kohistany
3. Service Area/Program:
  - VETE / Virginia Women Veterans Program (VWVP)
4. VDVS Leadership/Program Manager:
  - Deputy Commissioner Annie Walker and Beverly VanTull
5. Mission of service area/program (i.e. what does it do?):
  - A collaborative program providing access to community resources to educate, unify, and empower Virginia's women veterans. Our goal is to ensure women veterans receive timely and appropriate transition and benefits referral support, employment and education outreach, health, and community advocacy, and to identify any other needs not yet identified. We intend to expand awareness and advocacy on behalf of Virginia's women veterans to enhance their lives while increasing community visibility and partnership opportunities. We coordinate/monitor access to a wide array of local, state, and federal veteran benefits tailored to meet women's needs, develop objectives to support strategic focus on women veterans, and maintain a continued focus through the annual Virginia Women Veterans Summit.
6. Who does the service area/program serve (i.e. who are the customers)?
  - Women Veterans residing within the Commonwealth of Virginia are the benefactors of this program.
7. How is the service/program delivered?

- The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face meetings, targeted community outreach activities, and networking. Under the current special conditions of COVID-19, service provision is focusing on providing referrals and support telephonically, via email, and via virtual meeting platforms. Our annual statewide summit educates women veterans on resources, community partners, employers, and services available to them. The 2020 event was held virtually, and 1,351 attendees registered with over 1,900 views of the conference.

8. How does delivering the service/program help Virginia's veterans?

- Women veterans suffer a higher rate of homelessness, suicide, substance abuse and divorce compared to male veterans. By providing this program committed specifically to serving women veterans and their unique needs, we can minimize the emotional and social impact to the individuals and the communities they live in. We can attract and reach more diverse communities of underserved veterans and families with state services. This includes support for transition, employment, readjustment, continuing education, or vocational training. We can serve as a major support conduit to resources that assist them in overcoming barriers to professional growth all the way to personal/emotional trauma counseling. Through the annual statewide Virginia Women Veterans Summit, we provide a visibly focused outlet and opportunity to empower and inform women veterans regarding benefits, state resources, networking, and programs to which they may be entitled. This program is another tool to help ensure Virginia is doing all that can be done to support all our brave veterans in an equitable manner. This program provides a voice of advocacy and support to an otherwise "hidden and unheard" community of Virginia veterans in need.

9. By helping the veteran, how does it help the Commonwealth?

- By providing focused support to educate our women veterans of the services, resources, and benefits to which they are entitled, we will increase a sense of belonging, as well as utilization of services. As we empower our women veterans to achieve their full potential and enhance their health and wellness, they can build stability in their lives and Virginia communities. This support has positive effects that ranges from enhancing the Virginia economy with new women veterans owned businesses with employment opportunities to community engaged advocates leading the way in legislative policy. By enlightening Virginia communities about the issues and challenges that women veterans face, we will not only increase awareness, but enhance perspectives on how to improve local diversity and collaboration. Virginia will see results in a stronger workforce within connected communities leading to a more resilient Virginia. This will continue to bring a spotlight on Virginia as the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

10. What is the statutory authority for the service area/program?

- § 2.2-2004 (17). Additional powers and duties of Commissioner  
“Establish and implement a compact with Virginia's veterans, which shall have a goal of making Virginia America's most veteran-friendly state. The compact shall be established in conjunction with the Board of Veterans Services and supported by the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations and shall (i) include specific provisions for technology advances, workforce development, outreach, quality of life enhancement, and other services for veterans and (ii) provide service standards and goals to be attained for each specific provision in clause (i).”

**And** VDVS Goals to support “Compact with Virginia’s Veterans”

**VDVS Goal #1:** Augment the new Virginia economy with mission-ready, relevantly-skilled veterans by creating seamless transitions for veterans with high quality education and workforce services that accelerate career opportunities. (Workforce Development)

**DVS Objective #5 in support of Goal #1:** Women Veterans Program Manager to build strategic focus on women veterans, and a continued focus on the annual Virginia Women Veterans Summit (Outreach focus)

**VDVS Goal #2:** Improve outcomes for veterans and their families in the areas of behavioral health, rehabilitative services, supportive services, health and financial stability. (Quality of Life Enhancement)

11. Where do the resources for the service area/program come from (general fund, non-general fund, donations, etc.?)

- General Funds from Education, Transition and Employment (VETE) Directorate provides necessary support to cover personnel, supplies, and additional resources. Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Employer partnerships and donations made to the Virginia Veteran Services Foundation are used as additional funding sources. These partners are used to support our annual statewide women veterans summit.

12. How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of services? What service adaptations have been made or are planned?

- All outreach activities have had to move to a virtual format. We have seen that the program referral services are still able to be provided with the technology available. Virtual platforms like Zoom, Google Meet and Free Conference Call have been instrumental in keeping the program connected to women veterans and community partners. We have been able to start considering the benefits of a hybrid approach for the future to balance between using technology (such as virtual platforms and social media) while leveraging community resources, V3 partnerships, and in-person outreach to maintain contact with our women veteran communities. We have also noted that a number of women veteran centric community programs managed by local non-profit and faith-based organizations has experienced a lack of funding and an overflow of referral



requests. As such, women veterans are experiencing longer wait times for services or support. We have adjusted to these changes by directing women veterans mainly to VDVS internal support or VA services.

13. What are the biggest challenges facing the service area/program at present?

- Staffing is a challenge. Currently managing program development, women veteran inquiry support, community resources/ partnership engagement, outreach activities, identifying resources (new/ local) and administrative duties is a challenge to be handled mainly by one person.

14. What strategic opportunities are there for the future?

- Within FY 2019, Virginia's women veteran population increased to 107,533 citizen veterans according to VA Center for Women Veterans. We were able to reach over 1,700 women veterans during events such as Statewide Annual summit, women veterans week and other FY19 outreach activities. So far, in FY20, within a virtual environment we have reached almost another 1,600 women veterans. The one thing that "keeps me up at night" is how we can impact more women veterans with information, benefits, and support. The key objective of this program is to help women veterans find their "pathways to success" as they rebuild their lives in the civilian community after years of military service. We believe developing agency/community collaboration projects could help attract more women veterans to self-identify and utilize services, such as:
- Building Employment / Education/ Peer Coaching / Mentorship projects with federal partners and national groups like:
  - Women's Bureau under the Department of Labor  
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb>  
Ex. Women Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) Grant  
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/grants/wanto>
  - Virginia Community Colleges System (VCCS) comprised of 23 community colleges located on 40 campuses  
<https://www.vccs.edu/serving-veterans/>  
Ex. VCU Project Achieve -Women Veterans w/ Traumatic Brain Injury focus  
<https://centerontransition.org/>
  - Women Veteran Network (WoVeN)  
<https://www.wovenwomenvets.org/>

- Military Sisterhood Initiative

<https://www.militarysisterhoodinitiative.org/>

- Community Impact Volunteerism has a distinct ability to present a multi-tiered “benefit to the Commonwealth” effect. It will encourage more women veterans to self-identify as they reconnect to a “new mission” to serve Virginia communities. It will encourage a positive public perspective about veterans, as well as share the “good news stories” due to women veteran volunteers. This will enrich the next generation of Virginians by increasing community awareness and visibility through collaboration with groups like:

- Big Brothers and Big Sister of America

<https://www.bbbs.org/>

- Girl Scouts of USA

<https://www.girlscouts.org/>

- YWCA USA ( Empowering Women / Eliminating Racism)

<https://www.ywca.org/>

- Develop more opportunities to support Women Veteran Entrepreneurs

- Building a Virginia Women Veteran Business Directory with the support of V3 partners like PENFED or Federal partners like SBA or national partners like Bunker Labs and VWISE.

*“Women represent 10 percent of the veteran population in the U.S. but own one in six veteran-owned businesses. Their businesses generate over \$17 billion a year, and the growth of women veterans’ startups has been “higher than any other segment of the entrepreneurship economy,” according to Carla Harris, chair of the National Women's Business Council. However, women entrepreneurs receive a staggeringly low 2 percent of all capital investment and only 4.4 percent of total dollars in small business loans. Many women veterans are starting their own businesses with just their personal savings.”*

- Excerpt from <https://www.foxbusiness.com/money/women-veteran-startups-entrepreneurship-seda-goff>

15. What else do you want the Board to know about this service area?

- The VWVP program is working towards identifying (and vetting) unique opportunities to form partnerships with a diverse array of Virginia based resources/ partners who offer services designed specifically for women veteran needs. We are also targeting

opportunities to connect with national associations and federal partners who could expand support services within or into Virginia.

- Virginia is one of only 34 states nationally that have a state women veterans representatives. At the end of FY19, Virginia was one of 25 states with a fulltime program manager/ coordinator. No new states have added a part-time or fulltime program manager/coordinator since Virginia's announcement.

## **ATTACHMENT 6.b.**



**Virginia Department of Veterans Services**  
**Virginia Women Veterans Summit**  
*Virtual Summit Statistics*



**2020 Virginia Women Veterans Virtual Summit Statistics Overview:**

- Total Number of Registrants: 1,351
- Total Number of Views (live / recorded sessions): 1,951+
  - Maximum Viewers at one time: 212
- Total Number of Viewer Engagement (daily chat sessions): 867
  - Total Number of Chat interactions: 2,890 +
- Summit Speakers: 91
- Virginia Values Veterans (V3) and Community Partners: 31
- Locations Reached: 35
  - 31 US States (including 71 Virginia localities / cities)
  - 4 International Countries



**Virginia Department of Veterans Services**  
**Virginia Women Veterans Program**



**Strategic Opportunities**

- Virginia's women veteran population increased to 107,533 veterans\*
  - In FY19, we reached over 1,700 women veterans
  - So far in FY20, we've reached almost 1,600 women veterans
- Goal → reach a larger percentage of Virginia's women veterans
  - Employment/education/mentorship projects
  - Community Impact Volunteerism to help us identify women veterans
  - Support Women Veteran Entrepreneurs
  - Develop partnerships with Virginia-based and national/federal organizations to increase the number of women veterans served



\*According to VA Center for Women Veterans



Virginia Department of Veterans Services  
***Virginia Women Veterans Summit***



*2021 Details Internal Planning with AAP / VEC to start September  
- pulling together theme ideas & template agenda coming soon*

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# ATTACHMENT 7



101 N. 14<sup>TH</sup> ST., 17<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
RICHMOND VA 23219

*Air Force Association  
American Legion  
AMVETS  
Association of the United  
States Army  
Disabled American  
Veterans  
Fleet Reserve Association  
Fifth Baptist Veterans  
Ministry  
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans  
of America  
Korean War Veterans  
Association  
Legion of Valor of the  
U.S., Inc.  
Marine Corps League  
Military Order of the  
Purple Heart  
Military Officers Association  
of America  
Military Order of the  
World Wars  
Navy Mutual Aid Association  
Navy Seabee Veterans of  
America  
Non-Commissioned  
Officers Association  
Paralyzed Veterans of  
America  
Reserve Officers Association  
Roanoke Valley Veterans  
Council  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Virginia Army/Air National  
Guard Enlisted  
Association  
Virginia National Guard  
Association  
Women Marines Association*

## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES September 16, 2020

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) met on July 22, 2020, in person at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond. Each member of the Council wore their masks and we were all spread out in accordance with CDC regulations.

At the July meeting the JLC covered a number of topics, including updates on selection of a new Chairman (Bill Ashton representing the Fleet Reserve Association) and a new Vice Chairman (Denice Williams representing the Disabled American Veterans).

We received six initiative papers for the upcoming 2021 General Assembly. These papers were voted to be part of our discussion in our October meeting. Although our request for papers was July, we extended the submission to our October meeting because a number of the VSOs were not able to meet because of COVID-19.

We also discussed the possibility of doing our October meeting virtually, but the Council voted in favor of meeting in person.

We also received reports from the Virginia National Guard, the Department of Veterans Services, the Board of Veterans Services (BVS), and the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF).

A summary of the JLC 2021 Initiatives will be forwarded after our October meeting, which will be held on October 21, 2020 at the Virginia War Memorial.

Respectfully submitted,

William B. Ashton  
Chairman

THE 25 ORGANIZATIONS OF THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL HAVE MORE THAN 250,000 MEMBERS



## ATTACHMENT 8



### **VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION**

#### **Report to the Board of Veterans Services**

**August 20, 2020**

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees held a virtual meeting on June 24th, 2020.

On June 24, 2020 the final VSF Board of Trustees Meeting for FY20 was held electronically. The VSF Chairman welcomed everyone and began the meeting with an overview of FY20. The Chairman reported if expected donations were received by June 30<sup>th</sup>, VSF would close out the fiscal year with over \$625,000 in donations. It took a great deal of hard work and a successful collaboration with Secretary Hopkins, Commissioner Maxwell and the DVS team to achieve this success. The Chairman stressed that these relationships were imperative to meet future goals.

Secretary Hopkins reported that since the Governor declared a state of emergency, Department of Military Affairs (DMA) has been engaged in COVID-19 responses. They've worked closely with the Department of Health and our long-term care facilities for N95 mask fittings and have helped local providers obtain Title 31 funding. Members have also provided support at recent protests, with 70 personnel assisting the State Police.

Commissioner Maxwell presented a synopsis of the DVS return to work plan. He noted that the Veteran Care Centers are operating as they have been since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Commissioner Maxwell noted the eviction ban is about to be lifted and he is expecting the homeless veteran population to increase. Commissioner Maxwell is looking forward to working with the Foundation to meet the needs of Virginia veterans and their families as we face many uncertainties of the future.

Mr. John Lesinski, Development Committee Chair, reported that a robust fundraising/outreach plan was being drafted which will ask everyone to start developing email address lists for the Foundation for use in digital campaigns.

Senator Walter Stosch, Finance Committee Chair, reported that the newest budget is a placeholder and that he is anxious to employ funds towards the unmet needs of veterans. The committee will also be reviewing the transactional cost of receiving donations and will be working with DVS to come up with the final cost analysis.

Mr. Jack Hilgers, Procedures and Policies (P&P) Chair reported that the P&P Committee is working with DVS to update joint policies on fundraising, in-kind donations, fund management, and fund allocation and expenses. A draft of the policies were approved by the Board along with revisions to the VSF Bylaws and the DVS-VSF MOU.

Senator Walter Stosch provided the Nominating Committee Report offering the names of John Lesinski to serve as Chairman, Nicole Carry as First Vice Chair and Jack Lanier as Second Vice Chair. The Board unanimously approved the nominations. The new officers began their terms on July 1, 2020.

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, Brad Antle, Frank Driscoll, Frank Finelli and Al Pianalto retired from the VSF Board. Each trustee served two full terms and the success of the Foundation is a direct result of their leadership. Since the Board was unable to meet in person, we hope to plan a get together to recognize them prior to the September or December Board meeting.

With final numbers for FY20 now calculated, VSF received donations from 615 donors and ended the fiscal year with a total of over \$637,000 in revenue.

The next Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 17, 2020 at the Virginia War Memorial.

Respectfully Submitted,  
John Lesinski  
Chairman  
Veterans Services Foundation